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VULGAR ERRORS.

Interdum vulgus rectum videt est ubi peccat.



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M D C C L X X X I V .

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VULGAR ERRORS.

THE vulgar will always form their judgement upon the first appearance of things. They have neither the faculties, habits, or leisure which are necessary to enable them to examine the truth of any proposition with which they are not daily conversant, and which does not relate to the ordinary occurrences of life. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that misconceptions of the grossest kind frequently prevail among the people; but upon political subjects it is still less surprizing than any other, for this plain reason, that it is always the interest of many persons, for party purposes, to set forth political matters in false colours, whereby the vulgar are deprived of an equal chance of forming a right conception upon the first statement or appearance of any public affairs. Besides, the natural difficulties which arise to the greater part of mankind, from the want of time, attention, and ability to form fair and regular deductions from stated premises, they have this additional impediment to struggle with, that the premises themselves are seldom truly stated, and they are left to combat against partial and fallacious representations of facts.

As there is no subject, in which it is the interest of so many persons to deceive their countrymen, as in that of politics, so unfortunately there is none in which it is so easy and practicable. No topic is susceptible of such a variety of representations capable of making such deep impressions, or of raising such delusive hopes of false alarms. As it is the meanest, so, perhaps, it is the easiest art in politics, *spargere voces in vulgum ambiguas*. No other talents are requisite in any man for such an art, but a certain degree of industry in mischief, a boldness and effrontery in assertion, an indifference to detection, a want of feeling for his own character, with some knowledge of the characters of others; and that little share of worldly cunning, which enables men to see what terrors or assurances will most easily operate on the apprehensions or expectations of their neighbours. These are the pitiful arts by which political deceptions are propagated in the country, by which the eyes of the people are blinded, and their voice raised against every combination for the security of their liberties, every measure adopted for the support of their finances, and every exertion for the preservation of their foreign dependencies, or domestic tranquillity. If it is peculiarly easy to promote error, and excite clamour against the best political measures, that facility must increase in proportion to the magnitude of the benefit which they are likely to produce. Where the whole community is concerned, each man is the more easily induced to take part, and discontents are the more easily fomented; for, in spreading dissensions, the difficulty lies much more in attracting the attention, than in perverting the understandings of the people, and making their best friends appear to them as their bitterest enemies.

There.

Therefore, whenever a strong and upright administration, conscious of their own good intentions, shall so far rely on their abilities, and connexions in parliament, their consideration in the country, and their cordiality and unanimity among themselves, as to venture on the adoption of any great plan for the public good, which is not a mere palliative or half measure, but a bold and vigorous undertaking, they risque at once the loss of their popularity; they subject themselves to incur the odium of the public by attempting to serve them, and enable their employer to dismiss them under a temporary disgrace, until the people can be brought to their proper senses, their minds relieved from the impression of misrepresentations, and their ears purged of the poison infused into them through the channel of addresses dictated by patriot placemen, and news-paper paragraphs penned by the courtly demagogues in the pay of the interior Cabinet.

VULGAR ERROR THE FIRST.

That the Junction of Parties, formed by Lord North and Mr. Fox, was an interested Union of Individuals, who had not any one public Principle, in common, between them.

AMONGST the reasons which I shall oppose to the several Vulgar Errors, none shall be founded on assertions which are not acknowledged to be true by those who are most inclined to dispute them. Is there any man now, bold enough, since all that we have seen, to deny that a system has prevailed in this reign, of governing by means of a private cabal or junto, who were called (and

now style themselves) king's friends; who are personal favourites of the monarch, and who profess a perfect indifference towards the ostensible ministers, and disavow all connexions with them on any other account, or for any longer time, than that of their continuance in the administration of the king's affairs? I am sure, that there is no man so ignorant as not to know it; none so impudent as to deny it. Who were the chief opposers of this system? Lord Rockingham's party most certainly. Has Lord North ever been accused or suspected of being one of that secret junto? On the contrary, he has been the outward minister, and supposed to have been controuled and rendered insignificant by the interior cabinet. Let me then ask, Whether there is any man who does not believe, that Lord North and Mr. Fox formed their coalition on this basis, that the king's ostensible ministers were to be his real ministers; that a system founded on parliamentary confidence and support, carried on by public men on public principles, was to be built on the ruins of secret influence, personal favouritism, and the intrigues of the closet? Have they then no principle in common? were they not agreed on the first principle, the ground-work and corner-stone of the building? and might they not on such a foundation, proceed to erect an edifice, which though composed of different orders in its architecture, might still be strong and durable, commodious and serviceable to the state? When the subject matter on which they had differed was no more an object of contention, was it not for the good of the country, that they should put an end to domestic divisions, and heal the wounds which had so long torn it asunder, by endeavouring to co-operate in future measures, without sacrific-

cing their principles, by squaring their conduct to the great point at which they both aimed ; and agreeing, wherever their principles might ultimately lead them to a difference in opinion, fairly to submit their respective sentiments to parliament, and amicably to abide by that decision ? Such a junction is not destitute of principle, but is founded on one which all honest men must approve, so soon as it is fairly stated to them, free from the glosses and misrepresentations of party. That a considerable degree of unpopularity has been artificially created against this junction, cannot be disputed. The voice of reason has been drowned by scurrilous invective and idle clamour against *Coalition*. The very word itself, is used by the illiterate as a storm of reproach or infamy, as if coalition were abstractedly a crime in itself, divested of any consideration of the motives which produced it, or the circumstances which call for it. The truth of the case is so effectually concealed from the eyes of the people, that they are blind and insensible to other coalitions, far more unnatural, and which can be founded on no one principle in common between them, except it be a principle of indiscriminate support of the royal pleasure, and implicit obedience to the dictates of a court cabal.

VULGAR

VULGAR ERROR THE SECOND.

*That Mr. Fox's India Bill was a Precedent for
the Violation of Charters.*

OF all the unmeaning outcries which have been raised, this is the most absurd, but not the least provoking; for it has had the greatest effect in the country, and it is no small additional mortification, to lose the good opinion of your fellow-subjects, by the propagation of fictions, which are, if possible, still more foolish than injurious. It is a poor consolation to those, who fail in a laudable pursuit of public estimation, that they are defeated by nonsense. If ever any topic of public clamour can fairly be called nonsense, this cry about the *chartered rights of men*, deserve the appellation. A charter, considered abstractedly as such, being an instrument under proper authority, granting or confirming rights, franchises, or powers, to certain persons, is certainly a species of engagement and security, pledging the public faith, positively, and solemnly, for the maintenance and protection of the rights so conferred; and therefore charters must ever be looked upon by Englishmen as sacred covenants, never to be wantonly violated by the supreme authority of the legislature, nor lightly to be subjected to its influence. Thus far is admitted, but no farther: for whoever contends that there is any power in the crown, or even in the whole legislature, to grant charters which shall in no way be liable to parliamentary consideration and revision, knows nothing of the nature and first principles of the constitution. The
greater

greater or lesser degree of mischief which has arisen, or is likely to arise to the whole community, or to a considerable part, to the persons who claim under the charter, or to others, from the errors in the charter itself, or from the neglect or abuse of those who are entrusted with the execution of it, is the test by which we are to judge of the rectitude or impropriety of any parliamentary interference for the alteration or abolition of a charter. That this doctrine is constitutional, and that this authority must reside in the supreme power of the state, and that parliament has frequently exercised this power, is confessed by the opponents of Mr. Fox's bill. The degree of mischief, therefore, which would follow from not adopting some efficient measure, although it would necessarily occasion an infringement of the charter, is the proper matter for our consideration. And as I am confident that it will be admitted, that no salutary regulation could be invented, which would be, in any degree, adequate to the correction of the abuses in India, without touching the charter, I shall not tire the reader's patience, by enforcing a self-evident proposition; but must beg leave to observe, that although I am not surprized that the multitude should be deceived, and false apprehensions and alarms be excited in the country, by an outcry about the *chartered rights of men*, yet I am astonished that members of parliament in their debates, and ministers, who must be conscious of the inapplicability and pedantry of the phrase, as well as of the frivolous nature, and total want of ground for the objection, should have the effrontery to insist on such a topic, and to express themselves in such terms as would excite laughter in every intelligent mind, if it were not pre-occupied

cupied with indignation at the pernicious consequences which attend such gross misrepresentations. The arts employed for the propagation of this Vulgar Error have been of the lowest kind. A great number of persons, dependent on the company's servants, and many who have expectations of promotion for themselves or families, have sent letters and pamphlets to all the corporations in the kingdom, to alarm them with fears of an intention to violate their charters. In these writings (and I am ashamed to say in parliament also) the case of the charter of the city of London, in the reign of Charles II. has been quoted. What a disgraceful attempt to impose upon the ignorant! That case was as different from the India bill, as one thing can be from another: it was a proceeding in a court of law, not a bill in parliament: it was a proceeding by the king, to take away a royal charter: this is an interposition of the legislature, to modify, correct, and meliorate some provisions in a charter, which had before been frequently revised by parliament: that was an act of power, under pretence of law, and by the legal form and writ of *quo warranto*, at once to seize as forfeited, the charter of London, for having misused its franchise, in some trifling instances, by imposing a toll on its markets, and for having, three years before, petitioned the king concerning the prorogation of parliament. The India bill was a regulation by the authority of the legislature, for the better government of a great empire, four times as populous as Great-Britain, and larger in extent than almost any empire in Europe. The object of the bill was to relieve thirty millions of people from the heaviest oppressions, and to secure our possessions in the east. For this purpose,

pose, it was found necessary to vest the affairs of the company in commissioners, for the benefit of the proprietors and the public, which could not be done without affecting the charter. Nothing can be less similar to the forfeiting the privileges of a corporation for raising a toll on their markets. There is, moreover, this dissimilitude, that in that case there was a design to get all the corporations in the kingdom into the king's hands, by shewing how easily he might find legal pretences for vacating them, which plan succeeded by the surrender of almost all the charters in England: whereas, in the present case, no precedent could have been intended to be established, as no instance could any where be found of a charter, conferring rights and powers at all comparable to those of the East-India company. One thing, however, is remarkable, that this last imputation of an attempt to destroy all charters, comes from a strange quarter. With what justice or modesty can the present minister, or his friends, make such an accusation against others, when it is known, that the plan of reform which Mr. Pitt is pledged to support, for abolishing the boroughs, will cut up by the roots, and annihilate all the charters at once? Having said much on this Vulgar Error, which deserves so little discussion, I shall only add, that neither Mr. Pitt, or any of his friends, will, or do pretend, that his bill is not an infringement of the charter.

VULGAR ERROR THE THIRD.

That Mr. Fox's Bill was a Confiscation of Property.

I own, that this is a natural mistake for any unenlightened person to fall into. The clause which authorizes the commissioners to take all the lands, tenements, houses, warehouses, buildings, books, records, documents, charters, acts, instruments, papers, ships, vessels, goods, wares and merchandizes, money-securities, and other effects belonging to the company, seems, to a superficial reader, who does not attend to the nature of this transfer, as if every thing that the company were possessed of was taken away from them, and given to others. But how, and to whom is it given? To these commissioners to be employed as before, for the use of the company. Which does the company lose of all these articles? Not one. What property do the commissioners acquire in them? None at all: they only hold them for the use of the company. Had the directors, who held them before, any property in them? None: they only held them as the commissioners would have done in Mr. Fox's bill. Are the proprietors of East-India stock deprived of any property by this clause? Certainly not: the clause was nothing else but the legal mode of enabling those to whom the management of the affairs was committed, to possess themselves of the means of serving the company. I am sure, that the moment this matter is explained, the bugbear will vanish, and the world will cry shame at those, who endeavoured to persuade them that private property was invaded by the bill. I am
 sorry

forry that some great persons, who knew better, should have condescended to avail themselves of such Vulgar Errors, and to talk of confiscation where none existed, or were intended. I shall not enter into the topic of the patronage which it was supposed would be gained by the ministers under Mr. Fox's bill, as he has voluntarily consented to give up those parts of the bill which were objected to on that account, to render it more palatable to the whole house.

VULGAR ERROR THE FOURTH.

That in the Issue of this Contest, the People will take Part against the House of Commons.

THIS is by far the most fatal Error of the times. I wish it had been confined to the Vulgar alone! But, alas, it has reached the very summit and uppermost branches of our constitution. God grant it may not take deep root where we have lately seen it planted! for if it grows long in that soil, it will bring forth the bitterest fruits this country ever produced. If the sovereign of a mixed monarchy should be so weak, as to be induced to believe, that the people will ultimately range themselves on the side of the crown, and the aristocratical part of the constitution against their representatives, who can tell to what lengths such infatuation may lead him? He may be prompted to treat, with contempt, a co-ordinate branch of the legislature: he may contract an habitual disregard for their proceedings and resolutions: he may vainly imagine that nothing but *firmness* in himself (or, as others would call it, *obstinacy*) is requisite to suppress their spirit: he may be-

come so blind as to mistake their moderation for pusillanimity or impotency, and be driven on from one excess to another, until the patience of parliament be exhausted, and the people, at large, cry out with one voice against his government. Thus much I have said generally, of any contest between the house of commons and the crown. But what shall I say, if the point in dispute between the king and the commons be not any particular measure, foreign or domestic, not any particular privilege which the members of the house may claim, and which may contribute to their individual gratification ; but a question concerning the degree of authority and importance, which that branch of the legislature has a right to claim in this Constitution. When the question is of such a nature, and the people are made to understand it : when it is fairly brought before their eyes, divested of other matters with which it has no concern, such as the Vulgar Errors before stated, can any one believe that the people will be for diminishing the power and consequence of their representatives, which is in fact taking part against themselves? Will the people say, we think that the popular share and weight preponderates in the scale of the constitution? We wish that those whom we name, who are created by us, who depend on us for their existence as members of parliament on a future election, should have less authority and significance in the state than the other branches of the legislature, who are in no way dependent on us, and may imagine (however, mistakenly) that they have a separate interest from us. Supposing that the point in dispute was doubtful, and that there were persons who could conceive that the people, through their representatives (even, since the revolution)

had

had no right to controul the crown in the exercise of its prerogative of appointing ministers:—Could such a notion be a favourite doctrine with the people? Would they not decide the point in favour of their own rights? Most certainly they would: and who ever harbours, in his mind, so wild a conceit as the reverse of this proposition, deceives himself miserably: if he should happen to be a secret adviser of his majesty, and should infuse such poison into his royal ear, he indeed becomes a scourge and curse to his country: he gives counsels to his prince which endanger his throne, by advising him to rely on the most precarious of all possible dependencies for the support of his crown, a temporary artificial popularity founded on misrepresentations, which will shortly be cleared up, and excited by a preposterous attempt to raise a popular clamour, in favour of prerogative, as opposed to the privileges of the people. Should such unhappy counsels finally prevail in the closet, should the debasement of the house of commons become a principle of action, and all the solid intrinsic advantages of a strong government be neglected, all the vigour, efficacy, and dignity of a great empire be bartered for the pursuit of a contemptible series of struggles with the parliament, think, oh think, for a moment, what an exchange is made. The king is advised to forego a substantial support, for a visionary popularity; to prefer systematic weakness to real strength; to cast behind him, estrange and drive from his counsels the greatest talents, connexions, and interests in his realm, which would have upheld him at home, and rendered him respectable abroad: and in return for all this, his most sanguine flatterers cannot promise him any greater satisfaction, than the gratification of personal spleen,

spleen, and ill-founded prejudice, and some extension of his own private influence in the disposal of favours.

VULGAR ERROR THE FIFTH.

That the King must succeed in this Struggle by dissolving the Parliament.

AN obstinate perseverance in the preceding Vulgar Error, may occasion the trial of this dangerous experiment; dangerous I mean to the quiet of his majesty's reign, and destructive of many important national interests and concerns, which require immediate parliamentary attention, and efficient plans and measures, but by no means dangerous to the final success of that party against whom it is levelled. It is to those who consider things superficially and slightly, that an attempt to remove Vulgar Errors must be addressed. Perhaps it would be difficult to find a stronger instance, of the trivial treatment of a weighty and momentous consideration, than by adverting to that common topic of conversation, the dissolution of parliament. How often have I heard it observed, even in the streets, that it is clear that the king cannot gain the present house of commons, and that of course they suppose it will be dissolved?—What a conclusion is this for an Englishman to form? At what period since the revolution would such reasoning be used?—What does it amount to?—No less than that so soon as a house of commons ceases to be obedient to the royal pleasure, another must be chosen. A very experienced and able member, in an animated and eloquent speech this session said, that the
calling

calling a new parliament was treated as lightly as ordering a pair of new shoes, which he foretold would pinch worse than the old ones.

Let us examine the probable effects of a dissolution : First, as to the chance of obtaining such a parliament as would be subservient to the court ; without placing any very great confidence in the virtue of the times, and the public spirit of the people, I might venture to assume, that the dissolution of a parliament for the avowed purpose of getting by dint of money, another more obsequious to the minister, would be a fruitless experiment. If so barefaced a plot should not revolt the minds of Englishmen, if such an open attempt to suppress their liberties should not raise their indignation, they no longer would deserve their freedom. But it certainly would. Parliaments are not at all times, and under all circumstances, to be bought at open market ; and wherever elections are decided by independent voters, a proper attention to the safety of their privileges, and a due sense of the danger in which they are placed by such a measure, would influence the choice of their members. I am so perfectly persuaded, that the people will be brought to see their true interest, and to know that their representatives cannot be treated with indignity, until they themselves are insignificant, that I will take upon me to prophesy, that several knights of shires, and members for great cities, who fancy that the ministers are popular among their constituents, will lose their elections for having supported them.—Another circumstance may here be properly mentioned, though very obvious, as every one must be sensible, that no inconsiderable number of those who now support the minister, would be exceed-

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ingly offended, and entirely disaffected, if he were to dissolve the parliament, and put them to the expence of a fresh election. Besides this, it is well known that the bill for taking away the votes of custom-house officers, (commonly called Mr. Crew's bill) will very much diminish the ministerial influence in all the sea-port boroughs. Without entering further into this topic, on which the minister must be very well instructed by the assistance of Lord North's late confidential secretary, I would only desire him to appeal to that secretary, and to ask him what chance he thinks there is of retaining a majority, even if he should acquire one on the return of a new parliament, considering the present diminished state of royal patronage. I need not add to these considerations, the great and irresistible abilities with which the minister will have to contend. These few reasons may be sufficient to shew, that it is not demonstrable, or self-evident, that the king will succeed in this struggle by dissolving the parliament. But other effects would follow this fatal measure. We view it in too narrow a light, and confine our attention to a shorter period of time, and to smaller objects than the importance of the subject requires. It is not the downfall or maintenance of this or that administration; it is not the consequences that may follow in the course of a few months, but the general effect upon the system of our constitution, the operation upon the whole frame of our government, the influence upon the minds and dispositions of the subject and the monarch towards each other; the political peace and prosperity, or distraction and misery; in short, the future state of the nation, which is here brought into question, and to be considered. No prince of the
house

house of Brunswick has hitherto rejected the prayers of his faithful commons; no prince of the house of Brunswick has dismissed his parliament in anger: all contentions between the privileges of the people and the prerogatives of the crown, have slept for near a century. Are we to be brought back to those times? once more to be witnesses to those accursed scenes of civil discord? Are we to lose, or rather to cast from us, all the fair fruits which have grown and ripened yearly through many happy ages, under a succession of wise and temperate princes? Are all the benefits which we owe to the moderation of our monarchs, the wisdom of our statesmen, the learning of our lawyers, the cultivation of philosophy, which has softened the manners of the people, rendered them tractable, and habituated them to an acquiescence under a mild government; are all the lessons which we have learned from the history of our former monarchs, and the blessings which have been derived from a parliamentary settlement of the crown, to be thrown away and blotted out of our memory, as useless rubbish, unfit to form the foundation of any practicable system of civil liberty? God forbid that this country should be visited with such a curse! the calamity is too big for me to describe, the picture too dark and full of horrid scenes for me to paint; the best idea of it may perhaps be given, by shewing its reverse, which Mr. Hume has done in his masterly manner, in an Essay on the Protestant Succession.

After having observed, that, so long as the house of Stuart reigned in Britain, which, with some interruptions was above eighty years, the government was kept in a continual fever by the contentions betwixt the privileges of the people

and the prerogatives of the crown, he proceeds thus : “ But during these last sixty years, when a
 “ parliamentary establishment has taken place,
 “ whatever factions may have prevailed, either
 “ among the people or in public assemblies,
 “ the whole force of our constitution has
 “ always fallen to one side, and an unin-
 “ terrupted harmony has been preserved be-
 “ tween our princes and our parliaments. Pub-
 “ lic liberty, with internal peace and order,
 “ has flourished almost without interruption.
 “ Trade and manufactures, and agriculture, have
 “ increased ; the arts and sciences, and philoso-
 “ phy, have been cultivated ; even religious par-
 “ ties have been necessitated to lay aside their
 “ mutual rancour ; and the glory of the nation
 “ has spread itself all over Europe, while we
 “ stand the bulwark against oppression, and the
 “ great antagonist of that power which threatens
 “ every people with conquest and subjection. So
 “ long and so glorious a period no nation almost
 “ can boast of ; nor is there another instance in
 “ the whole history of mankind, that so many
 “ millions of people have, during such a space
 “ of time, been held together in a manner so
 “ free, so rational, and so suitable to the dignity
 “ of human nature.”

VULGAR ERROR THE SIXTH.

*That the Opposition to the present Ministers has
 been carried on with Violence.*

I do not believe that this Error has much pre-
 vailed abroad, but as it has been objected within
 the walls of parliament, it may be proper to re-
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fute this notion before it takes root with the people, and becomes a Vulgar Error. It must be expected, that those who are attacked, should cry out against the violence of their assailants; but that they should pitch upon those very instances which most clearly evince the moderation of their antagonists, is rather extraordinary and unreasonable. The principal instance of this kind is, that the majority in the house of commons are refusing the supplies—in the first place the fact is false—they have not done so; in the next place, there never was any reason for supposing that they would, on account of any events which have yet happened; for they have always declared, that although the house may be driven to such lengths by possible cases, yet that no circumstances had yet occurred, which would induce them to adopt such a measure, which they considered as the last resort.

The doctrine which has been very wisely and constitutionally laid down by the leaders in opposition, has uniformly been this—That nothing ought so much to be avoided, as dangerous to the peace and existence of a free and mixed monarchy, as the exercise of the extreme power vested in the respective component parts of such a constitution.—That the king's prerogatives of making peace and war, dissolving parliaments, appointing ministers, pardoning criminals, &c. &c. &c. are none of them personal prerogatives, but so many public trusts, and as such may all of them be abused.—So likewise may the privileges of parliament, in refusing supplies, &c. &c. if improperly exerted.—That therefore all moderate princes and wise parliaments, will do every thing they can to avoid having recourse to their ultimate powers. These are the principles
of

of the opposition, and they have acted in conformity to them. But the ministers accuse them of violence; those very ministers who have advised the king to dismiss a strong administration, for having brought in a bill which the house of commons approved, by a majority of near three to one, without his having expressed any disapprobation of the bill to them, and after having authorized an individual lord to declare his aversion to it.—Such advisers are very proper persons to accuse others of violence.—The charge of hasty, rash, and forcible measures, comes with peculiar decency from the mouths of those who must have said to their sovereign, “Dismiss your
 “ whole administration; it is true, they are
 “ strong enough to carry on your affairs in par-
 “ liament; but they are too strong to submit to
 “ your clandestine counsellors; we may perhaps
 “ be strong enough; if we are not so at first,
 “ perhaps we may become so, by employing
 “ those who are experienced in the lower arts of
 “ corruption; and if we do not succeed by these
 “ means, then, Sir, you may dissolve your par-
 “ liament, and buy one more obsequious to your
 “ commands.” In such counsels, there is, perhaps, some little temerity and violence, but it is by no means necessary to have recourse to personal retorts and reciprocal accusations for the defence of the opposition, against this very unjust imputation of violence, in refusing or stopping the supplies.—How have they stopped them?—The ordnance supply they have suffered to go on, provided that it accompanied a vote passed on the same day for redress, in the great matter of privilege depending; they have postponed the navy estimate for two days; and why? for no less a reason, than because it is necessary to proceed

ceed to the consideration of the king's answer to the address of the commons, previous to any other business. The very essence of the privilege of the house, consists in its claiming a prior attention, and requiring redress, previous to any other matter. The delay of two days is now complained of as a grievance, by those, who before Christmas, were as clamorous against the majority, for not allowing a long adjournment for the holidays. Let it therefore be known, that the supplies have not been refused; neither have they been stopped, but so far only as it was necessary to postpone them, in order that the privileges of the house might have pre-audience.—But what are these supplies? Any one would imagine by that expression, that the house was impeded in raising the money for the payment of the public creditors.—That there was a determination to throw out all the taxes, and ruin public credit; but it must be understood, that the supplies here spoken of, are the supplies for carrying on government, by providing a navy and an ordnance; that is, voting the *expenditure* of so much money for those purposes, not voting the ways and means of raising money; there is all the difference between these supplies and taxes, that there is between spending money out of your pocket, and paying your debts. But to this it may be answered, that these supplies of expenditure are for the support and safety of the nation, and that public credit is as much affected and injured by neglecting the *safety* of the country, as it is by not raising money to pay its creditors. I allow the truth of this proposition; but I must demand the concession of another, to me, which is equally true; namely, that public credit depends also on public *liberty*, as much as on any thing; and that
if

if our liberties were lost, our credit would be instantly annihilated. This has been sufficiently proved by many great authors, and is verified by frequent examples in neighbouring nations which have lost their liberties. They, therefore, who think, as I do, that the foundation of our liberty is built on the importance of the house of commons, and that that importance will be no more if the king can support ministers in whom the commons do not confide, must agree with me, that public credit will be destroyed by *granting* supplies, until such ministers are removed, or the house shall alter its opinion of them, and put confidence in them. All the great supplies of the nation have been usually voted in the house of commons, as matters of course, confiding in the assurances of the king's ministers that such supplies are wanted, and entrusting those ministers with the disposal and management of the sums voted for such purposes. These great money transactions are generally passed while there are not many members present; and it is even reckoned factious to speak at all against them. Ought not then the confidence of the house of commons, to be a necessary qualification to entitle any one to continue in the situation of the first minister of finance? Or is it fit that the house should be considered as being indispensibly bound to grant such supplies as the minister shall demand, to be managed by him, as he shall judge proper, without having any confidence in that minister? If this were the case, the house would be reduced to a meeting of pure form or ceremony, an idle pageant, summoned yearly, for the purpose of voting money, not as a matter of discretion, but as a mere mechanical operation, performed and exhibited for the sole purpose of deceiving the ignorant,

rant, by a semblance of liberty, and insulting the intelligent with the memory of their lost rights, of what they were, and to what they are fallen. What pretence can they claim to consistency, moderation, or to the smallest spark of whiggism, who endeavour to cry down the use of the extreme rights of the commons, at the same time that they are exciting an unnatural clamour in favour of the extreme use of the prerogative?

Another topic employed to throw the imputation of violence on the opposition is, that all these proceedings for the removal of ministers, have taken place before they have done any one act whatever. Give us a fair trial, say they, (though we refused you one) and as we have been named by the king, do not condemn us until we have acted blameably. Such language may seem plausible to persons not much accustomed to consider the principles of the constitution; but it is, in fact, as gross an Error as any of the former. Does any one conceive, that the king's right of naming ministers extends so far as this, that he may, without any abuse of the prerogative in that matter, as often as he pleases (monthly, for instance) dismiss his administration without expressing to them any disapprobation of their conduct, and wantonly turn his ministers out of the cabinet, with as little ceremony as any one would whip a dog or cat out of their room? But the present case is still stronger than that, for this was not a mere capricious dismissal of ministers without any pretence at all, but upon the ground of a particular measure, and that, no less than a bill in parliament, which had passed the house of commons. The ministers were dismissed for having been too well supported by the commons. The members of that house, who had voted for

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the bill, were therefore bound in honour to stand by them, and not to suffer them to be disgraced for an act, in which they were parties, and had concurred. Further, the whole house itself was concerned, and highly interested, not tamely to sit by and see their acts and measures made the foundation of a system of persecution and proscription of men whom they approved, with whom they had agreed, and in whom they had placed confidence. These are some of the reasons why they thought it constitutional to come to a vote of want of confidence in the new administration, immediately on their appointment; but principally, and more directly and avowedly, because they believed that the new ministers were privy to, and succeeded to their offices in consequence of a proceeding which they held to be a breach of their fundamental privileges. Every one knows the proceeding to have been this, that the earl Temple came out of the closet, and told every body that he had conferred with his majesty on the subject of the India bill, and that he was authorized to say, that the king disapproved of it. The commons then resolved, "that it is now necessary to declare, that to report any opinion, or pretended opinion of his majesty, upon any bill or other proceeding in parliament, with a view to influence the votes of the members, is a high crime and misdemeanour, derogatory to the honour of the crown, a breach of the fundamental privileges of parliament, and subversive of the constitution of this country." So far it must be confessed, that nothing violent was attempted. The subsequent vote on the same night, which was to prevent a dissolution of Parliament, was called violent, hasty, premature, surreptitious, precipitate, because it was passed late

late at night, after a long debate, when the members were exhausted. How a cautionary measure, to prevent the adoption of so desperate a one as the dissolution of Parliament, can justly deserve those epithets, I cannot understand. This, however, I know, that they were re-considered, re-adopted, and voted in full parliament. And if any one will take the pains to look over the votes and resolutions of the house on this subject, he will find, that so far from their being hasty, rash, and violent, they compose a regular series of propositions, following each other as corollaries; and that they are more temperate than could have been expected from persons so grossly injured, and after such a flagrant outrage against the vital principles of the constitution.

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